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Alex. L. Brown

With

Sharon

Kind regards.

—

9th Dec. 1897



SHINGLE AND SAND

Shingle and Sand

BY JAMES MABON,

Author of "Rose and Thorn."



GALASHIELS:

A. WALKER & SON, PUBLISHERS.

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To my Friend

A. N.



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CONTENTS.



	<i>Page.</i>
My Secret, - - - -	1
An Idyll of the Broom, - - -	2
Interrogatus, - - - -	9
A Summer Song, - - - -	10
A Wish, - - - -	12
The Time of Day, - - - -	14
A Heart's Soliloquy, - - -	18
Gloaming at Brora, - - - -	20
The Muse of Norman Gale, - -	23
Stirrup and Steel, - - - -	25
The Lost Meadow-Land, - -	27
Charlie Fraser, - - - -	29
"Life were not Life," - - -	32
Northward, - - - -	34
Life's Guest Divine, - - -	38
Without and Within, - - - -	39
Songs of a Sorrow, - - -	41
Remembrance, - - - -	44
A May Duet, - - - -	46
By Dornoch Firth, - - - -	48
"As the Roses Light the Garden," -	51

CONTENTS—*Continued.*

	<i>Page.</i>
Constancy, - - - - -	52
A House of God, - - - - -	53
By Sea and Shore, - - - - -	55
“ Alone we walked from the Village,” -	59
A Heart in the Highlands, - - - - -	61
Summer Dawn, - - - - -	64
“ Do not hide me in the Shadow,” - - -	65
Ups an’ Doons, - - - - -	66
Change - - - - -	69
A Lowland Lay, - - - - -	70
Reverie, - - - - -	73
A Song of the Sea, - - - - -	75
A Memory, - - - - -	77

PRELUDE.

*Where azure, amber, gold and grey
Weave wonders on the changeful way
There ever swings from shore to shore
The brimming sea of metaphor.
And, tremulous and hope be-crowned,
Hearts chant the glories they have found—
The floating woods where feathers stream,
The tinted shells that glint and gleam,
The coral palaces that hold
The legend-laden dreams of old,
The priceless pearls that gift the worth
To every art that sets them forth,
With drifted treasure-trove to speak
The joyous ocean of the Greek ;
And wandering on the voice-swept strand
One gathers simple things at hand—
Stray pebbles mixed with shining sand.*

SHINGLE AND SAND.



MY SECRET.

I MAY not tell my secret—no,
Love taught it to me long ago ;
 He came to me with wondrous eyes
 Illumined with that deep surprise
 That still on dawning childhood lies.
Unheeding of the world he set
His lips to speech. Can I forget ?
 Nay ! Never while the heart can beat
 And pulse and breath its song repeat
 To joy and sorrow as they meet.

AN IDYLL OF THE BROOM.

"I remember another time when we were going out he plucked two sprigs from the flowering broom. Our little girl said, 'Oh, father, that is not enough, let me get something to go with it.' 'No,' said he, 'anything else would spoil it.'"—*Extract from a letter.*

It is a far cry from Gala Water to the Southern seas, but when the full years of a long past lie over the life, and another gloaming, that has both east and west in its shadows, gathers on the hill tops, one dreams, with heart-throbs as deep perhaps as any the rosy time of youth ever knew—and then time and tide are as nothing.

It was told to me by another, one whose thoughts I am certain were as I have written, and the more I think of the story, simple as it is, the sweeter it seems.

He told it to me but the other day, when the first spring flowers had come, when the clouds were softer and the sky more blue, and the slanting sunbeams played with a new charm among the trees

on Gala Hill.

Were it only a story as one reads in books, then I might follow as fancy leads and tell of hopes and doubts, of loves and fears, garnishing a tale as some might wish ; but then it is all true—all as it was—all as it is, and there are some memories too sacred for the pen of any writer. But if I give at least one name it will be, I think, as those friends still “to the fore” might desire—those old companions, young hearted, with lively recollections of the Archie Dickson who loved the dear land of his birth with a devotion rarely equalled.

To him the Borderland was everything—the Braes o’ Yarrow, and hills and heights beyond, Tweed, Yair and Fernie-lea, with Abbotsford and Melrose, the triple Eildons and grey Ercildoun, the matchless charms of Bemersyde, and deeper maybe in his heart than any, redolent with all the sweets of youth that never die—the banks o’ Gala Water.

It was a calm warm day in early autumn

when some friends wandered away by Tweedside and the yet untinted woods of Abbotsford. The light softened by a haze lay on the hill slopes, brightening with ruddy hue the fields of barley. Tweed sang softly at first, slipping now and again beneath some overhanging bank of bramble and fern, and anon gurgling through the channel to dream in the quiet pools below.

A day it was of beauty, richness and fragrance, a day on which life seems one romance, when our hearts, forgetting time's rude events, cling only to the sweeter things we know.

So at least it seemed with one who, 'mid the pauses of the talk, slipped aside and plucked the seed-pods from the broom.

Though he smiled, yet, if you cared to watch you could see his thoughts were far away, and his face wore a look—

“Like one that sings and does not know,
But in a dream hears voices calling
Of those that died long years ago,
And sings although the tears be falling.”

As we said before—it is a far cry from Gala Water to the Southern seas, but the broom seed, gathered at Abbotsford that autumn day long years ago, found its way and a kindly bed in genial Southern soil, and didn't the heart of the old Galalean fill when the yellow tassels shone in the sun, brightening with their Border bloom the garden plot in far off Yarraville ! Neighbours smiled at the first green shoots, and wondered at his watchful care, and some perhaps were disappointed with it all—but then they were not “braw, braw lads.”

What was all the wealth of native blossom, all the glory and the rich colouring to the broom from Abbotsford ? What memories it recalled—friends—faces—stories !

At times he shut his eyes and heard the voices and the songs, and the blackbirds piping to the dawn in the land he knew so well—smiled through his longing and told to his little ones another tale of boyhood's days.

Time passed on, a few years, each with its lesson of joy and pain, till there came an hour when fell sorrow passed that way.

How it all came about is no part of my story, but how strange and sad it was to lie there in the cool sweet ward, dreaming of home, learning of pain, and schooling his heart to "bide its time."

Ah! the burden and heat of the day were well nigh over, with the victory of life, as some men count victory, still unwon. Dreams of the past crowded in upon him, blotting out the thoughts of the grim misfortune that had dogged his steps, dreams bitter and yet sweet through the mists of "Auld lang syne." Here it was meeting and there it was parting, and through all the mazes of thought, ere the dark wings brushed the rugged Scottish face, smoothing its wrinkles into peace, there beamed on him the faces of wife and children more beautiful than ever in the light of his fading day, with the sanctity of chastened human love.

Archie Dickson lies for ever at rest far

far from the Borderland, yet sleeps he as soundly as if brotherly hands had laid him within hearing of his native stream, and over his grave planted by loving hands and tended with that care that she alone can know, there waves in the breeze and glints in the sun the broom from Abbotsford.

That is all ; but when I heard the story and looked in the face of him who told it my thoughts flew to the “teller of stories” sleeping far away beside the surge of Samoan seas. And as he sang so thought I—for in spite of hope and the light of the future we live not a little in the hallowed past.

“It’s an owercome sooth for age an’ youth,
And it brooks wi’ nae denial,
That the dearest friends are the auldest
friends,
And the young are just on trial.

There’s a rival bauld wi’ young an’ auld,
And it’s him that has bereft me ;
For the surest friends are the auldest
friends,
And the maist o’ mine’s hae left me.

There are kind hearts still, for friends to
fill,
And fools to take and break them ;
But the nearest friends are the auldest
friends,
And the grave's the place to seek them."

INTERROGATUS.

THIS is Ego ! So you say.

Ego be it ! While the strings
Vibrate through life's silences
Does it matter how one sings ?

When we venture to the street
Singing joy or sorrow, each
With the message mood has lent,
Does it matter which is which ?

This is mask—and that is face;
This is Ego—that disguise;
Is it in the singer, pray,
Where the light or lesson lies ?

This is mask, and that is face,—
So the world agrees to guess ;
But which is mask, and which is face
You may—I will not confess.

A SUMMER SONG.

A SINKING sun, a western wind,
And clouds that bar the blue,
And in the east the Eildons three
Set in a purple hue.

A blackbird mad with love's delight
Sings hope and heart begun,
Where lilac tassels swing across
The last glimpse of the sun.

Come near, come near, your eyes are wet ;
That bird song weaves the tune
Of other woodlands dim at dusk
And other nights of June,

Of scented clover in the fields,
And green boughs overhead,
Of other hands and other lips
And lanes with roses red.

Come near, come near, joy is not dead
Though some sweet voice grows dumb ;
The blackbird sings with ardent heart
The after bliss to come.

Smile—as your wont is—smile and list,
And watch the white clouds fade
To tender tints about the nest
The silver moon has made.

The grey night on the Eildons three
Its fleecy fold has flung ;
The river sings the softer song
The blackbird left unsung.

And in the wood, the fragrant wood,
The wandering west wind dies
Where blossoms lean among the grass
And close their dew-kissed eyes.

Come near, come near, life's song is sweet,
No sweeter song could be,
When to the years—the fleeting years—
Love gives the golden key.

A WISH.

THOUGHT brings to-night a wondrous song,
But will not give me words to wing it—
I sit me down where shadows throng
And hear the heart within me sing it,
But all I can and dare repeat
Is "Life be long and love be sweet."

I turn from every other grace
To catch in dreams a greeting tender ;
I conjure up the boyish face
That woo'd me into mild surrender—
Till every footstep in the street
Strikes "Life be long and love be sweet."

Some stranger guest of calm delight
Throughout the soul within is straying;
I look out to the falling night
Where hills beneath the stars are
praying
To hear again the echo meet
Of "Life be long and love be sweet."

But ah ! Unsung is all my song,
A pensive spirit cannot give it ;
I sit me down where shadows throng
And fondly hope that you may live it,
For all I can and dare repeat
Is "Life be long and love be sweet."

THE TIME OF DAY.

COME weal, come woe, I sing the song,
And trust ne'er to regret it,
The muse may witless work a wrong,
If so—you can forget it.
The other day one took a text,
Deducing from it wonders,
And dealt his logic unperplexed
In metaphoric thunders.

He said the poor were always dear,
That none to God were dearer,
And made his subject crystal clear
To every sinful hearer.
With artful skill he calmly set
Life's social codes in order,
Until complete perfection met
From border unto border.

The poor, he said, were kith and kin
To One who was his Master,
And as he bravely cantered in,
The adjectives flew faster.

Grave sin, he said, it was to slight
The poor, or scorn them coldly,
For all were brothers, black and white,
His formula said boldly.

I asked the poor man yesternight
From daily toil returning,
If such had made his spirit light,
And set his ardour burning.
He gazed—my hope had known eclipse
Had he kept looking longer—
The muttered “fudge” grew on his lips,
To something sounding stronger.

“God’s poor indeed! That quantum kind
Symbolic is unending ;
The practical limps far behind,
A laggard in attending.”

“Now look,” said he, his open hand
In gesture stretched emphatic,
“This fee, faw, fum—we understand—
Convention’s deal dramatic.”

“A common craze that knows no stint,
To its persuasive clatter,
How much is mood, how much is meant,
Is quite another matter.

I'd rather see that text he took,
Writ forth in deed and duty,
Than hear the lesson lipped by book
In strained pathetic beauty."

"The Master long ago, when here,
Had other ways of dealing ;
But then He lived on less a year
And set Himself to healing
The broken hearts that knew no praise
From soft suave saint or sinner—
Unloosed Himself the bonds, to raise
And make the weak man winner."

"The vast unthinking poor, forsooth !—
His silver tones subsiding,
Slipped glibly on from truth to truth
In confidence confiding.
Unthinking poor! They kept His word,
And they it was who knew Him,
And they it was who hailed Him Lord ;
The priest it was who slew Him."

The song is sung, whose e'er it be
Then they can stoop and take it,
The error in it lies with me—
I cannot now unmake it.

Time runs apace, and death is nigh,
 Beyond our realising ;
But certes there is time, say I,
 For more than temporising.

A HEART'S SOLILOQUY

I HAVE no promise now to make—
I need no promise ; time will keep
A holy savour of your sake
Along the pathway, till I sleep.

To-day it seems so far to go,
To-morrow maybe it is near,
And birds will sing and blossom blow
And I will pause again, and hear

Your voice, for it is always there—
The same low sweetness that is less
Of word than look, and everywhere
I turn me to its tenderness,

Among the firs, and by the hills,
And where the wise wan waters flow
Full of the secrets, singing rills,
Born 'mong the moorland mosses, know.

I have no need of promise, dear,
 'Twas seeking then, 'tis waiting now ;
And all the music of the year
 Is but the spirit of a vow

That smiles at words, and ever keeps
 The brimming dream of love for me ;
While in my heart a twilight sleeps,
 Calm with the thought of love to be.

GLOAMING AT BRORA.

A RANGE of low-lying hills—outposts of Morven and Ben Clibrick, set in masses of birch and scented fir and crowned with a matchless glow of blooming heather.

Waving cornfields to the right, behind us dull purpled slopes against a dappled sunset sky—eastward the white surf lacing fringes to the North Sea on a yellow beach, and away to the south, cutting inland like a silver blade, the shimmering waters of Dornoch Firth.

Such a peace around as poet could not speak, and yet a song in the air that is all the sweeter lacking words—the warmth of an August eve, the hum of bees, shadows chasing shadows, and our hearts beating in tune to the softened voice of the far-off chiming waves.

A dun deer, startled, crosses the open, and for a moment lends new life to the brown patched glade that lies beyond. Away in the distance a blue smoke rises slowly from the village set straggling in

its quaint bareness on the shore, and kin to a gloaming that seems full of memories, guests dreamt though all unseen—somebody sings among the heather a sweet old-fashioned lay.

The last note dies and we wander homeward, the sun sinks lower and the shadows cease their play ; the white cotton plants stand out on the marshy flat below ; a pheasant calls from the wood and a soft wind steals whispering through the bent, and while the darkness gathers and the crescent moon shows through a bank of tangled cloud we smell the honeysuckle in the garden lane.

The tide goes out and the tide comes in,
All over the sand of the grey North Sea ;
And ever it sings the same old song
That the years have sung to my love and
me.

Ever and on though the years may change,
On and ever through shade and shine ;
The voice of the heart is the voice of a sea,
Singing a song that is ever divine.

I look in your eyes again to-day,

Living the bliss that has never a name,
And your smile is more than all wealth
could be,

And your love out-rivals the dream of
fame.

Tender and true is the life of love,

And true is the heart that has leaned to
me ;

And the tide goes out and the tide comes in,

And I pledge you again by the grey
North Sea.

THE MUSE OF NORMAN GALE.

As sweet as love that fondly looks—

As love that looks and longs ;

As sweet as woodland water brooks

That sing their summer songs ;

As sweet as orchard blossoms set

In wreaths of emerald hue ;

As sweet as meadow clovers wet

With kisses of the dew ;

As sweet as blackbird notes that greet

The dawning of the morn ;

As sweet as hayfield winds that meet

Where young rose-buds are born.

Sing, singer, sing ! Thy song to-day

Gifts life with new heart-ease ;

Our keenest care we give away

To humming of the bees.

Anew we love the hills—where peace

Sleeps to the blue-bells' chime ;

We love the steadfast stars that keep

Their tender troth with time.

We love the clouds, the shady trees,
That gift us twilight dreams ;
We love the shimmer on the seas,
The bliss on Border streams.

Sing, singer, sing ! (I know not how)
The songs ye oft have sung,
And brush the sorrow from the brow
And give to silence tongue,
To lay our hate, and curb our frowns,
And call us back again,
From fever haste and crazy towns
To wood and country lane.

STIRRUP AND STEEL.

“It’s up” and “It’s up” said Elliot,
And “It’s up” and “It’s up,” said we;
And it’s over the broom and the young
green wheat,
And down by the Solway Sea.

It was there we rode in the morning,
And there we rode at noon;
And there we fought, when the red sun set,
By the wan light of the moon.

“It’s up” and “It’s on” said Elliot,
And “It’s up” and “It’s on,” said we;
For it’s five we rode, but two lay still
On the sand by the Solway Sea.

It’s alack ! for the good steed Bonnie,
And alack ! for the dapple grey,
And alack ! for the lads who were blithe
as the larks
As they lightly rode that day.

“It’s up” and “It’s on” cried Elliot;
And “It’s up” and “It’s on” cried we;
For the steel must drink of the dearest
wine
This night by the Solway Sea.

And there we strained on the shingle,
And there we crossed and met,
And thrice we backed in the racing tide
Till the saddle girths were wet.

And there we fought in the moonlight—
Jock Armstrong, Elliot, and me—
Till three had fallen and two had fled,
That night by the Solway Sea.

And “It’s up” and “It’s home” cried
Elliot,
And “It’s up” and “It’s home” cried
we,
For hearts must bleed, and the mass be
sung
For this night by the Solway Sea.

THE LOST MEADOW-LAND.

THERE'S a lost meadow-land far away
Where wild birds sing all the live-long day;
Where blossoms gem the greenest grass,
And poppies bow as the shadows pass.
I think you know where the sweet land
 lay,
But alas! we'll never come back that way

I saw that land in a dream last night,
With its wavy woods and its brooklets
 bright;
I heard your song that had never a care
To banish its rapture anywhere.
But O! you know where the sweet land
 lay,
And alas! we'll never come back that way.

There's a lost meadow-land, heart of mine,
Love's own summer-land, shade and shine;
But grey miles lie, behind, before,
Hiding that meadow-land evermore.

You know, you know where the sweet
land lay ;

But alas! we'll never come back that way.

Alas! we'll never come back that way.

CHARLIE FRASER.

'Twas springtide on Culloden
When the White Cockade was doomed,
And the heather wore the purple
Long months before it bloomed.
Where Macgillivray mowed his harvest,
And alone bold Keppoch fell,
And the Butcher proved the warrant
Of his regency for hell.

A wounded hero resting
On his elbow, gazed away
O'er the smoking field of carnage
To the Beaully waters grey.
Did his eagle eye grow misty?
Was his pale cheek pale with pain?
'Twas the sorrow of his homeland
Filled his gallant heart again.
Alas! for all his beauty
That never blanched with fear,
The Butcher roamed Culloden
With his hell-hounds in the rear.

“Now are you for us, fellow?”

“For the Prince!” the youth replies
With the pride of brave devotion
Shining brightly in his eyes.

“For the Prince! by all that’s sacred
Shoot the scoundrel, Wolfe!” said he;
But the Major made refusal
In grim words of irony.

“Nay! nay!” said all his comrades,
“’Twere a shame beyond remede”—
All the better nature starting
Into horror at the deed.

Did the royal Butcher falter?
Was his soul one moment free?
Did he pause for once to ponder
One sweet thought of chivalry?
Has the tiger in the jungle
Tender pity for its prey?
Such the pity that the Butcher
Gave the true and brave that day.

For the common trooper, nameless
Thank God, at his chief’s behest
With a half-raised musket—fired—
Laid the hero with the rest.

And it's softly lies young Fraser
Where the muirland mists are grey,
And it's softly lies the Butcher
In his royal tomb far away.
But, to-day, while o'er Culloden
Summer gloaming gently creeps,
Lays one heart, in love, its tribute,
Where brave Charlie Fraser sleeps.

“LIFE WERE NOT LIFE.”

LIFE were not life without the troth that's
true—

The grace of grace, the soul-refreshing
dew—

Heaven's gift divine, whose fragrant
unction brings

New strength and glory to earth's common
things.

Though long miles stretch between, and
days divide,

Still speed my thoughts from wimpling
Tweed to Clyde;

Still clings my heart with fondest hopes
to thee,

And faith supplies what love now fails
to see.

Take then my love, for why should I
retain

What now to give is scattering but to
gain;

'Tis love buys love, aught else it needs
must spurn:

I rest in peace since thou dost love in
turn.

NORTHWARD.

OH, the dun dreary flats of Caithness, stretching away to the left, inarticulate lonesomeness losing itself in the grey mist of the gloaming !

Usually so gay, we have all become so silent, glad perhaps for the lull and the weird stillness in which to dream our dreams.

Life runs at such a rate; but behind us lie the haste and the hoyden wilfulness, and time for the nonce seems pausing to rest.

The beat of the horses' feet weaves a rhythmic dreaminess, while the sharp staccato of the driver's voice marks interludes between.

Now the roadway dips into the hollows, then rises again in its persistent sameness, but giving us beyond the cliffs that frown between, glimpses of the tumbling masses of the wild North Sea.

Now the shadows creep closer and something of the stillness goes, and with the shadows come a cold dreich rain and a wind that smell of the Pentland Firth.

We speak in whispers and begin to wish. Suggested comforts sound so cruel and the man who makes them is sent to sit alone.

Now there's a halt and a bustle as they change horses, some of us casting envious looks as, smoking and tired, they are led into warmth and shelter. Now there's a comparing of watches, a cheerful word or two, a cracking of whips, and the same firm voice, and we break away with renewed speed once more into the wind and the rain.

Here and there a crofter's cottage looms out of the shadows—a dog barks—and the lights gleam through the little windows.

Bit by bit our spirits rise. We shake off our dreaminess and discontent, and, laughing as we look each other in the face, make believe we sight, stretching away

before us—bold warden of the North—
tide-beaten Duncansby Head.

There are cold miles still, but every
turn of the wheels brings us nearer our
“desired haven” and we shut our eyes
and picture to ourselves—as only men in
such circumstances can—the joys at John
O’ Groats !

Now we skirt marsh and moor, and
stalks of peat set like so many ramparts
guarding the paths, till over the flats
before us we see, set against the clouds
that scud above the Firth,

“ The flag that braved a thousand years
The battle and the breeze.”

Now we are all alert as we sweep past
the cottages and the open doorway of the
blacksmith’s shop and draw up at the
welcoming porch at Huna’s.

The light streams out on the falling
night, plays on the sweating horses, and
the heathery patch beyond shows the
smile on every face and the sea-foam
breaking on the beach.

“Bravo, Nansen!” cries one as he descends from his perch and flings his arms around the flag-staff on the beach, “Bravo, Nansen! the North Pole at last;” and Nansen had no more satisfaction when he sighted again the land he loves than we had when we sat within the weather-beaten walls telling our stories and singing our songs while the ocean and the wind rolled choruses without.

It was after supper when three men clambered shoreward, startling the sea-birds where the white spray flew o’er the shingle, and sang to their neighbour Stroma, to the north wind and the reckless tide,

“Braw braw lads o’ Gala Water.”

LIFE'S GUEST DIVINE.

HEED not though all the world forget
If love be with you; love has set
The golden tune, that heart to heart
May sing its perfect counterpart,
Oblivious in the mutual grace
To discords of the market place.

And love is with you, charming care
To nobler issues everywhere;
And wooing with a fond surprise
Time's sorrow from your dewy eyes;
Transforming doubt to hope divine
And life's wan waters into wine.

So let the world without go past
While love victorious, first and last,
Through all the chamber, purple spread,
To dignify his kingly tread,
Moves, monarch of the hearts that make
Him welcome for each other's sake.

WITHOUT AND WITHIN.

As one, who roving in the street,
 Dreams, and in dreaming seems to hear,
In accents sweetly incomplete,
 His own name uttered in his ear.

So move I, in the crowd alone,
 With that deep spell that seems to grow
About the voice whose gleeful tone
 Went down to silence long ago,

And passing out beyond the strife
 That fills the chambers of the day,
Thought touches being with the life
 Whose dim horizons stretch away,

Where heavenly heights in calm sublime,
 Above the valley mists have drawn
Benignant brows, that hold for Time
 The hidden birthplace of the dawn;

Till wild conjecture's witless throng
 Brawl in their haste, and to the street
Life calls me backward with the song
 Of tones that question, hearts that beat

Their memories out in words that wear
 But echoes, hollow in their din,
Of all the hopes and fears that bear
 Brief sway imperiously within.

SONGS OF A SORROW.

I.

Now in mine ears a cry as of the sea,
Complaining softly to the summer night
A cry forlorn, that through the waning
light

Dies in a sob upon the fading lea.

So still it is, this tide-born phantasy
Is louder than the song the summer
sings,—

Full flooded dreams that wander wistfully
Among the movings of a thousand
wings;

Old days are in it, echoing days before
In solemn whispers where the shadows
lie;

Old griefs again yearn to the silent shore,
Old sorrows brood beneath the star-lit
sky—

Thus in mine ears a cry as of the sea,
Fraught with the memories of Eternity.

II.

Sad, life's sea-dream; but sadder unto me
The care that wafts it through the
summer eve.

Poor stricken soul—at peace, and yet
I grieve
In wordless kinship with the moaning
sea.

So many seas, so many perils past,
And England held thee while we smiled
and said,
“When northward hies he on his way at
last

Our mountain brows with heather will
be red,
And we will sing our songs and smile away
All thought of sorrow in the summer
bliss,

Time shall be sweet—we said—and crown
each day

With satisfying thoughts of tenderness.”

Now in mine ears a cry as of the sea,
Fraught with the memories of Eternity.

III.

Wearied and weak from battling with the
main,

At last soft rest and kindliness to shed
Love's gentlesunshineGod-likeoverhead
With peaceful words to soothe the heart
in pain.

And then hope smiled, and failed and
smiled once more,

Hope bringing hope. Alas! Life's tran-
quil time,

Whose coming no man knows, leaned from
that shore

Unseen by us, and to that sacred clime
Beyond the bar where chafes our curious
care

Love led thee Home.

We never met—yet part !
Those sprigs of Scottish heather white
and fair

Kind hands laid, for me, on thy tideless
heart.

But in mine ears a cry as of the sea
Throbs with the memories of Eternity.

REMEMBRANCE.

OFT 'mid the dreams that tide-like ebb and
flow,

Thine eyes look into mine with tender glow,

Restful as dying daylight on home hills.

No time for vague regret, no time for pain,

Though lips may falter o'er old words
again,

Born of the longing love's own self
instils.

The reaper sings about the field to-day

Where ruddy sheaves stand listening to
his lay

That, breaking into tuneful fragments,
thrills

The clear crisp silence, while a new delight

Chimes echo to his song with fervour
bright

As waking morn—responsive joy that
fills

The heart, when 'mid the dreams that
ebb and flow

Thine eyes look into mine with tender
glow.

A MAY DUET.

TWEED blithely sings her sea-ward song
Where Neidpath woods grow fair,
With mosses sweet about their feet
And hawthorn in their hair.

But valour casts a tender glance
Where love's own voice grows low,
And knightly songs of knightly wrongs
Gift Yarrow's silver flow.

Too sad, too soft your Yarrow glides
Beside each still green brae;
The singer hears the fall of tears
In all her pensive lay.

But sweetly sings the Shepherd's bird
Above each fragrant mead !
Ah ! you should hear the blackbird's clear
Fond piping on the Tweed,

Where sun and shadow fleck the fields
And blooms nod in the grass,
Your hills but lie calm 'neath the sky,
To watch the white clouds pass.

Nay! Silence, Sorrow's sister, here
Weaves peace both noon and night;—
Such peace as lays for other days
Love's dead face in our sight!

I'll sing my Yarrow, thou thy Tweed
So love to love shall draw,—
While sun shafts gay gild Newark grey
And shades drape Bowerhope Law.

Sing thou thy Yarrow, gentle soul,
Tweed still must be my care,
While summer beams, with golden dreams,
Slant o'er the hills of Yair.

BY DORNOCH FIRTH.

WE leave the golfer behind us; his cry of "Fore" grows fainter, and we pass along the links with their bent and blossom to gaze at the surf and sea and the climbing slopes of Tain beyond.

Along the downs lie stretches of short scrubby grass, with tufts of heather here and there, and tiny yellow blossoms that smile about our feet.

Overhead is the blue sky and a brilliant sun and in our faces, like a scented douceur, the cool breath of the shining sea—the sea tranquil and in a lonely mood, with but the far off "surgy murmur" telling how its great heart beats.

The gulls flash through the heated noon, and double and turn and dip their white wings warily; and along the shore, where graceful furrows rise and fall, little lost pools gleam in their idleness, gemming the tawny sand.

Over the bent and the pebbles, and through the tangled weeds, bleached and dry, borrowed of some old tide that raved of wintry weather ; on, step by step we venture through the soft sands that ooze and bend, and tempt our hearts to doubt their welcome. From the silver streak the seals gaze at us curiously, more eager to know the louder we call, as we move along, dreaming of Arnold's lay:—

“She steals to the window, and looks at
the sand;

And over the sand at the sea;

And her eyes are set in a stare;

And anon there breaks a sigh,

And anon there drops a tear

From a sorrow-clouded eye,

And a heart sorrow-laden,

A long, long sigh

For the cold strange eyes of a little
Mermaiden

And the gleam of her golden hair.”

The shells lie at our feet, all along the margin of the narrow bay, some half buried, some glistening with their gifts of briny dew; spiked, and flat, and pointed

they are, white, and pink, and soft grey pearl; and some there are that make us play the child once more listening at the tinted lips to the secrets of their ocean home.

Away landward the old town looks down over the long sandy stretch, where our footprints show up like distinct desecrations on the rippling flat. To the left a narrow ridge, where rank grasses wave and where only sea storms ever stretch a greedy hand; but behind us a flowing tide and little waves that hurry on hiding behind a mingling fringe of creamy foam, whispering us to dally but a little till they play about our feet, and such a mournful pleading voice they have and such a calling is there in the chastened tone, that we linger longer than wise men would do, till breathless and half doubting still we reach the tinkling shingles on the friendly ridge. Then its homeward we turn to the old house at Proncy where the yellow corn waves, and a welcome waits, warm as the Highland hearts that give it.

“AS THE ROSES LIGHT THE
GARDEN.”

As the roses light the garden
In its darkened shade of green,
Burning brightly on the branches,
Gleaming here and there between;
So you bring the blessed sweetness
Where the sombre thought-land lies,
With the blossom of the smiling
That is all about your eyes.

CONSTANCY.

GOLD on the grain, and dew on the lawn,
And a blush divine on the gay hill-
heather;

And love, akin to the rose and the dawn,
Crowning heart's hope 'mid the autumn
weather.

Ever a song in the woodland free,
And ever a song in the silver river,
And ever your voice, and your eyes o'er me,
Living, and dreaming it ever and ever.

A HOUSE OF GOD.

It has no walls, the hazel boughs
Are all about its porch,
And down the aisles of softened gloom
The chestnut lights its torch.

Our footsteps on the tinted moss
No wondering echoes wake,
Where white, and red, and purple blooms
A quaint mosaic make;

While to the lacing roofs of green
The sweetest voices rise
In songs that stir within the heart
New dreams of Paradise.

Yestreen, a time-tongue garrulous
Set in a doleful key;
To-day, a tender peace of God
Full of broad charity.—

The whispering wind, the shining stream,
The bloom, the wild bird's song,
A holy calm that soothes away
Remembrances of wrong.

No tongue to babble caste or creed
And banish peace away.
Fair House of God, the longing heart
Finds prayer and praise to-day.

BY SEA AND SHORE.

THE roses seemed listening, and the corn, not yet sickle-ripe, bowed and nodded in the croft as if it knew what we were saying.

There is such a passion about a summer eve, such a fullheartedness, such a throbbing of love, living out its divine beneath the calm untroubled heavens; the sensitive soul claims kinship and wonders if the flowers have pain—the pain one feels when the lilacs bloom and the first blackbird thrills the silence of the budding earth with the rapture of a song.

“Ah,” you say, “only the Poet’s fancy, beautiful enough maybe, a mixture of madness and ideal; but the wind blows—the indifferent, the cold, the real, and it is gossamer, only gossamer.”

Gentle cynic, I know you, of ancient birth, but bear a little, oblivion will follow

curfew soon enough; but when the hills flush with the sunset, and the meadows, where the ox-eyed daisies stare, sleep while the river rhymes, and that heart melody breaks through the moist and fragrant woods, you'll allow, won't you, that there's "method in his madness" after all?

We have a busy-day world, where the heart is often caged like the thrush 'mid the city smoke, where the wheels grate and men shout and bargain and fashion plumes itself and cons anew the decalogue that rules its courts, a busy-day world indeed, shams sounding often their hollowness to some uninitiated touch.

But when the roses bloom and the hills blush with the heather and the corn nods, and crowded streets are far away, we forget the jarring and the doubt, and learn, in the sunny silence or the softer grey of the gloaming, the secrets that slip from the soul of summer.

Softly sank the August sun. The grasses whispered where the river glided home. Yellow, yellow were the sands,

and far as the eye could reach the sea lay stretched from sky to sky a dazzling vision of changeful glory.

The path sloped shoreward, embroidered in purple and yellow, and beyond the fields a soft light, fast passing into shadow, lingered for a little on the heights by the simple Kirk o' Clyne. A brown brook half-hidden among the grasses babbled and sang to the butterfly waltzing on its banks. A white sail stood out for a moment against the gleam of sunset sky. Beyond the trees a little bird flew in loops across the clover, and, beside us, another startled into utterance, soared away and sang, while a sweet mingling of quaint Highland accents reached us from the lane below.

Long we sat on Mount Pleasant among the heather, musing and talking by turns. Now it was of yesterday we spoke, and now of to-morrow, with all the varied hopes and fears that lie between, coming ever back to the inner kinships of life, and the things we

but partly understand, dreaming, as many a mystic has done before, dreams we could not, if we wanted, gather into words.

The night fell and the stars came out; the cottage windows gleamed. A gentle face looked from the open doorway and a voice called through the gathered shadows; and while the ocean song grew fainter and the moon glimmered over the far off hills, rest and peace crept in upon the heart with that deep sense that is more than words can make it,—the sense born of life's experience—disappointment, trial, hope, endeavour; that sense, call it what you may, which, having found a sweet sanctity in the come and go of common things, feels that, though externals pass, love and thought remain—life evolving step by step till perhaps existences are perfected in spirit.

“ALONE WE WALKED FROM
THE VILLAGE.”

ALONE we walked from the village
Away to the gleaming shore,
When the full tide rocked in the hollows
And the wild wave rush was o'er.
A grey-winged bird sat dreaming
On the breast of the sleepy sea,
And the wandered wave was silent
As a lonely heart should be.

The golden sunshine wavered,
And a soft wind hastened down
Over the ridge and the meadows
And the quaint, old, red-tiled town ;
And a song was in it, bringing
New thought for life's changeful day,
That passed from our wayward fancy
With the brown-sailed boat in the bay.

With the marshalled tide we listened
To the muffled moan forlorn,
From the distant-hearted ocean
Where eternal thoughts are born:

We ne'er had a shade of sorrow
That day by the dreamy deep,
But only the nameless longing
That will not lie down and sleep.

Love comes to one in the springtime
With the apple-bloom on the tree,
When the smoke hangs over the village
And the birds are full of glee;
Love came to one in the summer
In the touch of a tender hand,
When the laughing children gathered
To play in the shingle and sand.

A HEART IN THE HIGHLANDS.

LAST nicht I dreamed the pipers
Cam' playin' through the toon,
An' I, a barefit laddie,
Went mairchin' up an' doon.

I saw the toon folk rinnin'
An' my wee heart lap wi' glee;
But aye the foremost piper
Kept lookin' roon' at me.

I saw my mither stannin'
On the low rung o' the cross,
Her richt han' on her e'ebroos,
As she lookit ower the Moss.

An' as she sat doon greetin'
When I clam' beside her knee,
I look'd, an' saw the neibors
Lookin' waesomely at me.

I saw na' what was comin',
An' I kent na' what had been,
But I grat beside my mither
An' the neibors on the green.

I saw the wavin' tartan,
An' I kent the bonnie air,—
The soughin' an' the sabbin'
O' "Lochaber nae mair."

I mindit o' my faither
Wi' the bonnet on his broo—
A plaidit man—wha kissed me—
But I couldna see him noo;

An' when I speired my mither,
It just made her greet the mair,
Where she sat, an' lookin', lookin',
Ran her fingers through my hair.

When I waukened in the mornin',
The lads were stannin' roon':
But aye the buirdly pipers
Gang playin' through the toon.

An' aye I see the neibors
Come rinnin' to the green
Where my mither's stannin' lookin'
Wi' her richt han' on her een.

The glens are fu' o' simmer;
An' the siller birks are braw;
An' the purple heather blossoms
On the hill-taps, far awa',

But the pipes that played Lochaber
Spak' o' gloamin', saft an' sune,
When we'll hear nae mair o' greetin'
An' oor dreamin' 'll be dune.

SUMMER DAWN.

To greener banks Tweed tells romance
Of sunshine and of shade;
Life's langour dies where brighter skies
Cast glamour on each glade.

Birds greet the morn, the flowers awake,
The buds burst on the tree,
The old oak dons its tints of bronze
For all the world to see.

Oh soft west wind, Oh wet west wind,
Blow all our cares away !
The skylarks sing upon the wing
And hearts grow young to-day.

“DO NOT HIDE ME IN THE
SHADOW.”

Do not hide me in the shadow,
Let me feel the summer sun,
Where the road runs through the meadow
Ere the hill path is begun.

Let me see the swinging blossoms
And the green upon the grass,
And the flashing gleam and gladness
Of the swallows as they pass.

In the shadow love is silent ;
Faces fade, and pass from sight;
In the shadow time is songless,
And the day is as the night.

There's no shadow where the Light is,
Sorrow's self was slain by Me.
You are blind, My child ; to-morrow
In My shadow you shall see.

UPS AN' DOONS.

O SOME maun gang,
 An' some maun bide,
An' some maun slip
 To the other side,
An' ane may stan'
 When another maun boo,—
It may be me,
 An' it may be you,—
But, somehow or other,
 We'll a' pu' through.

It mak's but a dreich
 An' a dreary day
To gather an' grab
 Till the hair growes grey,
But some maun hae'd,
 An' they glunch an' gloom,
An' others maun wait
 At the cock o' their thoomb,—
But, somehow or other,
 We'll a' hae room.

It's a gey bit speel,
An' a stiff bit brae;
But a lightsome heart
Gangs a lang, lang way;
We canna gang back
On the fit-path mair,
An' it's better to look
To the hill-tap fair,—
An,' somehow or other,
We'll a' won there.

There's some o' us bairns,
An' some o' us men,
But the langest day
Is but short ye ken;
An' the lark has sung,
An' the nicht maun fa',
An' the Maister says
“Ye maun clim' awa',
For, somehow or other,
There's hame for ye a'.”

So some o' us gang,
An' some o' us bide,

An' some o' us slip
 To the other side;
But the rough o' the road,
 Is never sae bad
To the weary feet
 O' the heartless lad,
If ye, neibor-like, gie him
 A hand to haud.

CHANGE.

OH, roses bloom, and wild birds sing,
When dew-drops gem the grass;
But roses fade and birds take wing
When summer glories pass.

What said your heart to me yestreen?
What says your heart to-day?
Heavy and sad the shade between
Since Love has gone away.

A LOWLAND LAY.

O WHAT can I sing when the heart is full?
And what can I sing if it be not sorrow?
For love that is late is love that is lost,
And that is the song on the braes of
Yarrow.

But Yarrow may sing to the summer sun,
And chant to the hills of its old-time
treasure;
For love that is late is never my lot
But love that is more than our words
can measure.

But what can I sing in the Lowland land,
Pensive and sweet in its sacred sadness?
Shall it be love in a lightsome lay
Or mirth that is mad from a fount of
gladness?

There's nothing in life like the leal, leal
heart,

There's nothing in time can equal its
singing;

And closely we lean, though we wander
apart,

And list to the message its music is
bringing.

So while I wander the bright summer
through,

Dreaming my dream in the golden
weather,

Love sings the song that is sweeter
than words—

Glamour and grace of the fair white
heather.

Blithe be your rest in your Northern
home—

Now through our woodlands that echo
is ringing,

Welcome you back again—this is the song
Yarrow and Tweed with the Gala are
singing.

O mountain, and river, and moorland
mist

Where sunshine and shadow sleep softly
together !

It's away to the North—is the heart—to
the North,

And there's never a dream like the
dream of the heather.

REVERIE.

LEANING awhile by the borderland
Where the spirit-dreams of old days
I see—
Sun and shade
To a twilight made,
And tender eyes that look at me.

Silence breathes where the river sleeps,
And life has a grace like the dawn of
day
When bright wings pass
O'er the haunted grass
Brushing the dews of night away.

Yet lonely all, and alone as noon
When the blue haze shrouds the languid
chime,
When hill slopes lie
'Neath a summer sky,
Drowsily dreaming a pause in time.

But love, dear love in the stillness makes
The heart a throne with its purple state,
And stars will shine
With a light divine,
And songs be sung where the shadows
wait.

A SONG OF THE SEA.

WOOING, ever wooing
Solemnly chanting sea.
But the land lies still
In its gay green garb,
With a brown cheek turned to thee.

Wooing, ever wooing
With voices that rise and die
From wavelets kissed
By the summer sun,
Where the shimmering pebbles lie.

Wooing, ever wooing
With surges deep and strong;
Flashing the hues
Of a thousand dreams
In the pauses of wild song.

Wooing, ever wooing
With a mystical heart-throb,
When the full tide turns
From the listening land
Back with a lonely sob.

Wooing, ever wooing,
Wooing in blue and grey ;
Under the moon
And the glimmering stars
And the watchful eyes of day.

Wooing, ever wooing,
Solemnly chanting sea.
The pain of the ages
Set in thy heart
Waiting the last decree.

A MEMORY.

“Tis a league and a league to the Lena
Falls where the crop and the upland
meet,
But I can smell the warm wet wind that
whispers through the wheat.”

SOME things we read we never forget.
At times they flash in upon our shaded
silence with such a searching light that
we feel face to face with the unseen reality.
The ideal becomes the actual and our
hearts beat with a new-born fervour.

I was dreaming to-day of the sunshine
and shadow in the glades I know so well
—dreaming of friends and kindly faces,
and of voices that seem the sweeter now
that they are silent.

A soft wind moved among the branches
without, the fragrance of roses and honey-
suckle stole through the open window,
while the gloaming, fading into that blue-

grey one feels but cannot speak, touched all the uplands into a quiet peace.

It was then I thought—or did the thought come unsought to me?—in the spirit of “Henry Esmond”—“but only true love lives after you, follows your memory with secret blessing or precedes you and intercedes for you. *Non omnis moriar*—if dying, I yet live in a tender heart or two; nor am lost and hopeless living if a sainted and departed soul still loves and prays for me.”

We always think the old days were the best, and that these times are not as the times we once knew. I know not, but this I know, that some memories seem to take a deeper impression as our years roll on. Some little part that was vague stands out distinctly, and, at such an hour, we have only to shut our eyes to hold renewed communion with that which we are pleased to call the Past.

We need not be at war with the world to do so. Nay! the dispeace, God knows, is largely of our own making. Ah! we

are fools, are we not, to invite our foes to make their "household jar within"?

There is a quaint pathway winding down a hillside to a bosky glen beneath, where God's acre lies around the ruined Church and the river sings to sleepers who never wake. There the blossoms nod all the summer and the birds sing among the clumps of hazel; where the veils of matchless greenery fringe the red rocks, glowing ruddy and warm in the sun.

Nooks and crannies are there, and caves that have each a story, and burns that, they say, ran red in Border strife, and we know that beyond, on the hill-top, in times more distant still, proud warriors held court, and mused, too, perhaps, between the night watches, on the memories of their dead past.

There's an old well in that glen where we drank, and our fathers before us, and where (let me whisper it) once a singer sat and sang his heart's care into words till there was a mist before his eyes and a strange twilight over his spirit. Great

trees are there, chestnut, and elm, and oak, whispering their mysteries—what *do* they say?—and scented limes that lace their arms along the path, a reredos and screen in this temple and retreat of God.

On the ruined walls the ivy creeps and clings, the birds build without and within, and the grass grows green where once we sat looking in the furrowed face with the silver hair above a braided brow—wondering at the tremor in the voice that sang to the plaintive tune, with that old-world sweetness that haunts us still, the simple tender psalms of the Shepherd King.

We sought to step it the other day, that neglected Bethel, from the doorway, past the window, and away to the left. Here it was we sat. I heard again the rustle in the stillness, the voice of the grey-haired preacher and the wailing minor strain, the hum of the bees in the sunshine without, and the bleat of the sheep in the fields beyond—then all faded, and about us again were the flowers, and the ivy, and the grasses, with stray speedwells

smiling at our feet.

It was down that hill-path he came. For long months I had not seen him and I thought he looked braver, with his Norse-blue eyes, than ever.

An old school friend he was, one who never failed you, who, in spite of many a sorrow, took his boyish heart to manhood with him and laughed sunshine into you, till there was no room for darkness at all.

We wandered in that glen among its kindred surroundings, with a ripened feeling in our hearts, that, full and glowing though it was, somehow did not wed to words.

Perhaps words were not needed to emphasise what we could look and feel, but there grew a hunger and a longing in his eyes that for a time seemed to overshadow hope, then, with undue reserve in full retreat, a joyous past unveiled itself and for the hour we lived over again all that was best of that yesterday.

"I sail on Friday," he said, as we stood hand clasping hand. I glanced back as I

leaned on the stile at the hill-top and he had not moved. We looked our last, and waved our good-bye. I have not seen him since.

Alas ! no one knows where he is. Has he gone under in the surge of life ? No sea can be more kind or cruel ! It is whispered that he too is dead. I know not, but this I know—a sweetness ever comes into sorrow, even as men dream, and aside alike from cant and creed we hold that

“ Knowledge by suffering entereth
And life is perfected by death ! ”

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